

A few pointers on oral presentations (some points also useful for a poster):

- know your audience and speak at an appropriate level; it's always better to say something you think is "basic" than to assume that the audience knows it;
- consider who is speaking before you, and discuss their presentation with them in advance if it will overlap with yours;
- practice your talk in advance to be sure the slides are visible and your timing meets the requirements;
- black text on plain, white backgrounds on slides usually make the material easier to read;
- if you use a template for a background, make sure it is small (does not take up too much of the screen) and leaves the main part of the screen white (patterned backgrounds make it hard to see the information); it's also helpful if the template has some connection with the talk (e.g. school colours or an image from the talk) but a template is not essential;
- prepare approximately 1 slide per minute of your presentation (more slides if they are just quick photos, fewer if you need to explain a lot on each slide);
- do not use data tables (at least not with more than 3 rows and 3 columns) as they are usually quite unreadable;
- use more diagrams, and fewer words;
- indicate the meaning of all parameters in all equations, and use the same font for a symbol whether it's in an equation or in the text;
- use the same symbol (and same font) for a parameter each time you use it (e.g. don't use U for energy on one slide and E for the same type of energy on another slide);
- indicate reference for material on the slide where you use it (small font is fine) in sufficient detail that someone could find the reference, e.g. Smith et al, J Amer Chem Soc 14, 1469 (2010);
- all text (aside from references) should be at least 16 point font;
- psychologists have shown that the most readable text is sans serif (e.g. Arial) for titles and serif (e.g. Times New Roman) for text; select fonts that are True Type (marked TT in drop-down menu in Powerpoint) as only these fonts will read reliably on any (most) computers;
- use colour sparingly, to emphasize points (a slide with 10 colours used rather randomly is usually difficult to read)
- put your name, the name(s) of you co-workers (including supervisor), your location and the date on the title slide;

- if a two-slides per page printout of your slides is difficult to read, the slides are too crowded;
- for generic photos (e.g. a house) taken from a website, no reference is required; for specialized photos (e.g. an instrumented solar house) taken from a website, include the URL on the slide; Note that Google Images is a great source for images;
- arrive early to set up the AV and load your slides on the computer or try your computer;
- introduce concepts (even if you think most people will know them) so that you teach the subject;
- point to the projection screen and look at the audience when you speak (don 't talk to your computer screen);
- movies are excellent but really only work reliably if you use your own computer;
- if you use a Mac, use your own computer for the presentation and also bring an adapter for the projector (most projectors directly link only to PCs);
- use animation sparingly, and only to emphasize a point;
- always bring a backup copy of your talk (e.g. on USB) even if you bring your own computer;
- have someone help you check for typos!
- practice so that you can talk smoothly without notes -- and speak with enthusiasm!

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